

2019 CONTENT MARKETING INSTITUTE

AGENCY SURVEY



CONTENT
MARKETING
INSTITUTE™



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- WELCOME 3
- KEY FINDINGS 4
- **PART 1**
 - COMPARISON OF AGENCIES BY CONTENT MARKETING SERVICES OFFERED..... 5
 - Full scope of content marketing services vs. specialized service(s) related to content marketing
- **PART 2**
 - ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON AGENCIES OFFERING A FULL SCOPE OF CONTENT MARKETING SERVICES 14
- **PART 3**
 - CHALLENGES: FULL-SCOPE AGENCIES 23
 - CHALLENGES: SPECIALIZED AGENCIES 26
- METHODOLOGY/DEMOGRAPHICS 28
- ABOUT 31

SURVEY TERM DEFINITIONS

Content Marketing—A strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience—and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action. Content marketing includes activities such as strategy, content creation, distribution, and measurement for earned, owned, and paid media.

Report Terms

Full-scope Agency—An agency that offers a full scope of content marketing services (e.g., as a standalone agency or part of a large or lead agency)

Specialized Agency—An agency that offers a specialized service(s) related to content marketing (e.g., SEO, social media, video production, email marketing)

Welcome to the 2019 Content Marketing Institute Agency Survey report. This is the first study CMI has undertaken to learn specifically about the content marketing services agencies offer. Among the questions we had been hearing in the market:

- How many agencies have embraced content marketing as a service offering?
- How long have they been offering content marketing services?
- What types of services do they offer?
- What are their biggest challenges when working with clients?

The agency landscape is complex. With that in mind, we designed the survey to group respondents into two pools:

- Those who indicated their agencies offer a full scope of content marketing services (e.g., as a standalone agency or part of a large or lead agency)—the report refers to these as “full-scope agencies”
- Those who indicated their agencies offer a specialized service(s) related to content marketing (e.g., SEO, social media, video production, email marketing)—the report refers to these as “specialized agencies”

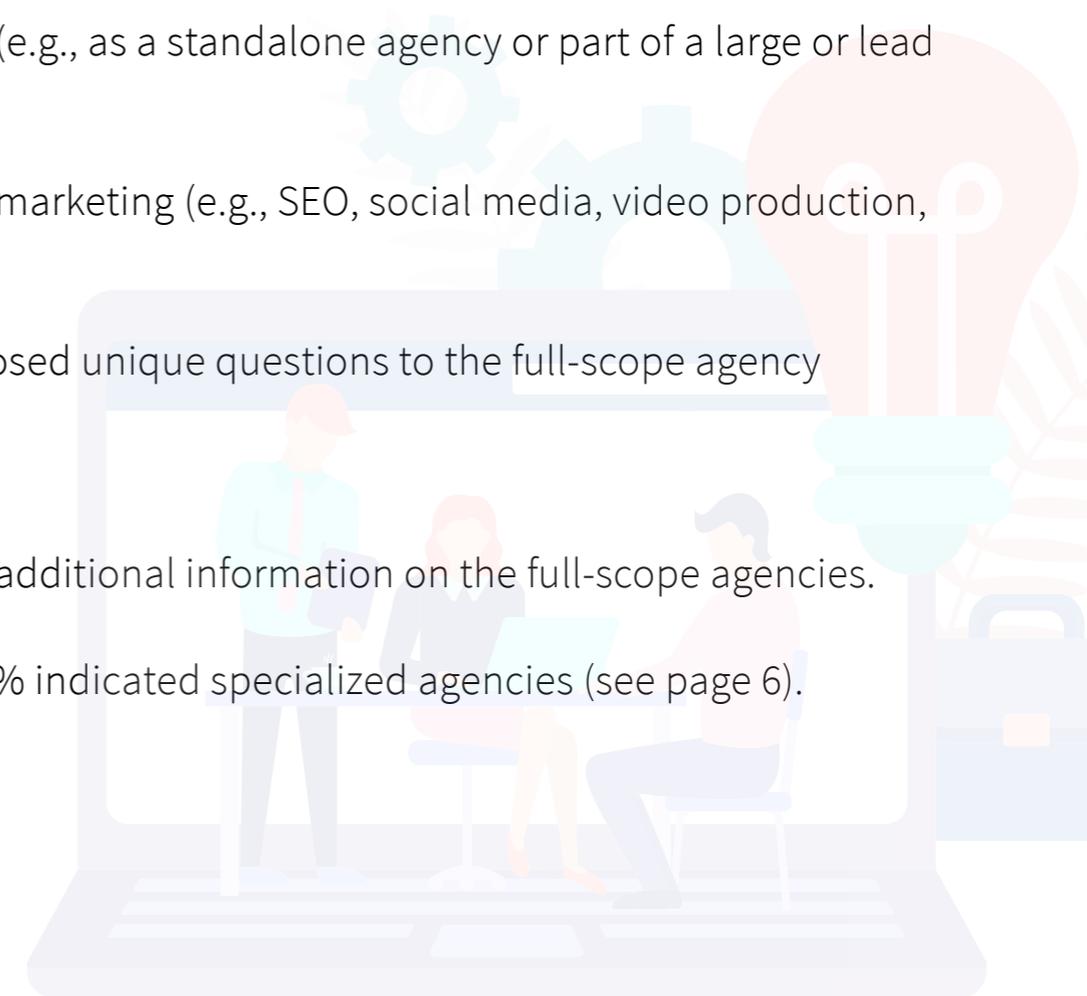
We asked both groups the same questions early in the survey, and half-way through posed unique questions to the full-scope agency respondents.

How to Read This Report

Part 1 provides comparisons of the full-scope vs. specialized agencies. Part 2 provides additional information on the full-scope agencies.

Sixty-one percent of respondents indicated they were from full-scope agencies and 37% indicated specialized agencies (see page 6). Therefore, keep the different bases in mind as you view the comparisons in Part 1.

Part 3 shows challenges faced by both types of agency respondents.



Among both agency types...

Agencies are not new to content marketing.

Nearly half of all respondents report their agencies have been offering content marketing services for 7+ years.

There is some reliance on content marketing as a total of agency business.

Content marketing comprises 50% or more of all respondents' total agency business.

Organizations of all sizes seek content marketing services from agencies.

Full-scope agency respondents provide content marketing services to more large and midsize organizations, while specialized agencies are more likely to serve small organizations.

Most agencies rely heavily on word-of-mouth referrals to generate new content marketing business.

The top nonpaid source for generating new content marketing business among all respondents is word-of-mouth referrals, followed by agency blog/websites and in-person events/networking.

Among those offering a full scope of content marketing services...

They're feeling successful.

Almost three out of four (73%) say their agency is extremely/very successful in achieving their clients' content marketing goals.

They're adding more content marketing services and clients.

Nearly 70% report an increase in the breadth of content marketing services offered and number of content marketing clients served in the last 12 months.

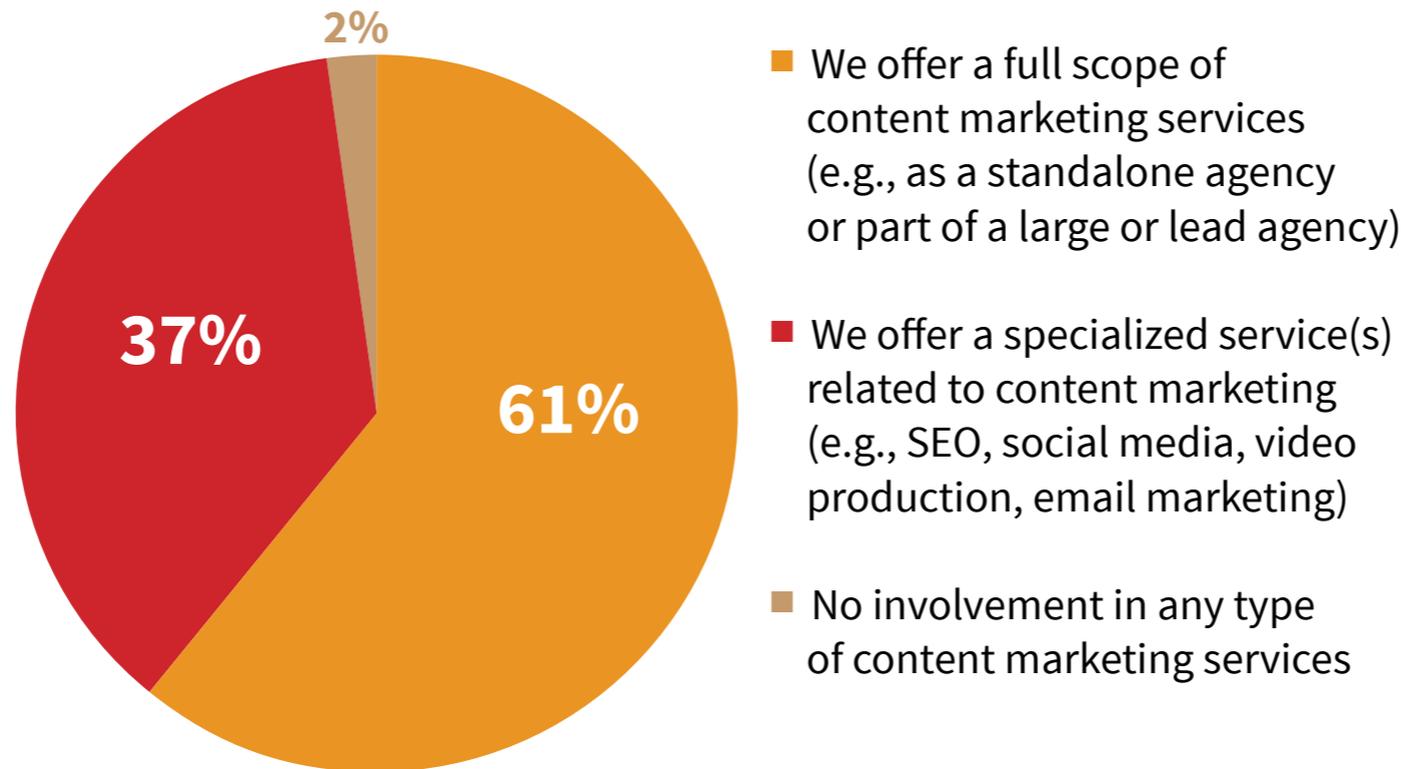


PART 1

COMPARISON OF AGENCIES BY CONTENT MARKETING SERVICES OFFERED

61% indicated their agency offers a full scope of content marketing services; another 37% said it offers a specialized service(s) related to content marketing.

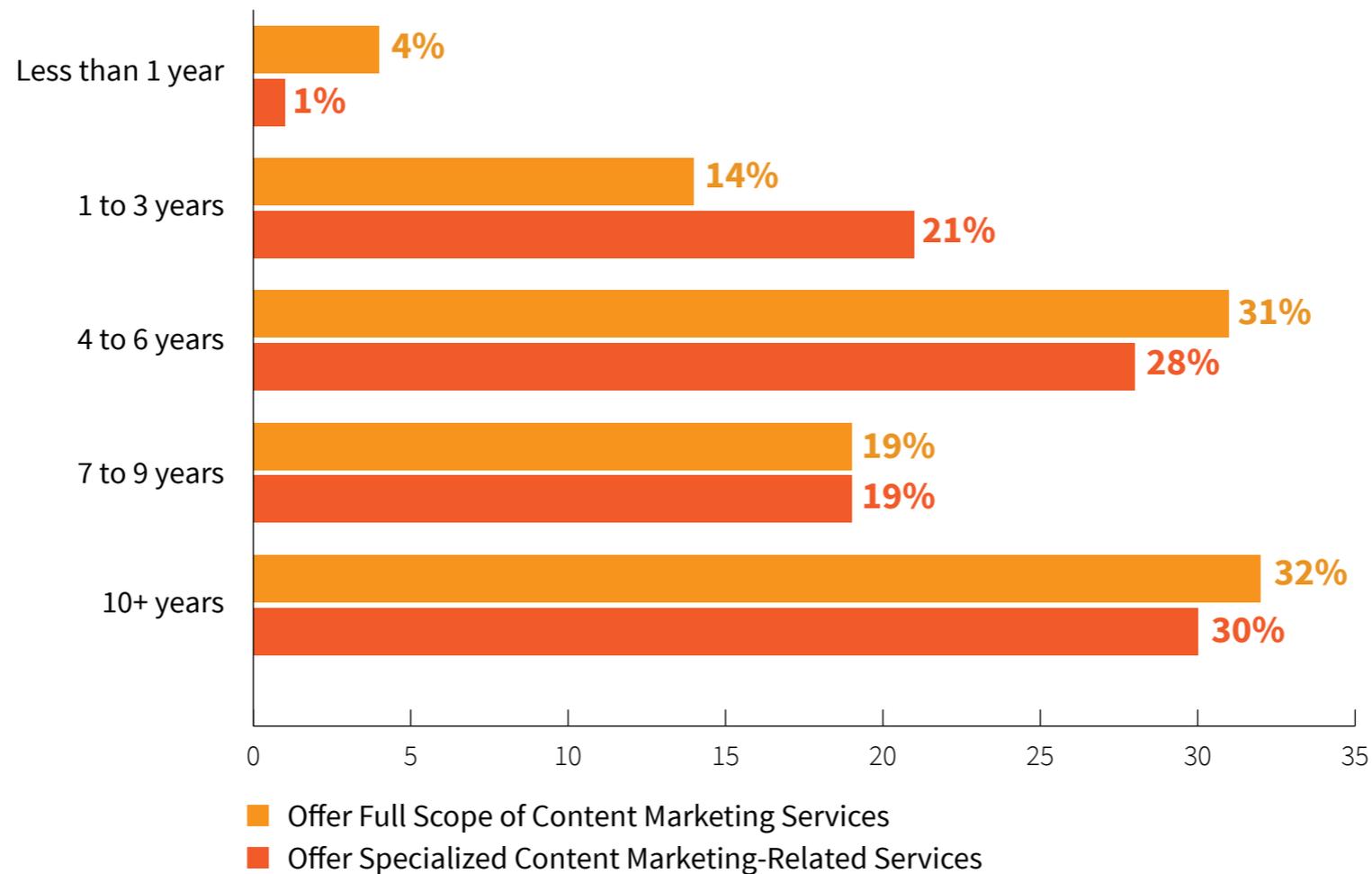
Agency Involvement With Content Marketing



Base: All agency respondents; aided list.
Source: 2019 Content Marketing Institute Agency Survey

Around half from both agency types indicate their agency has been offering content marketing services to clients for 7+ years.

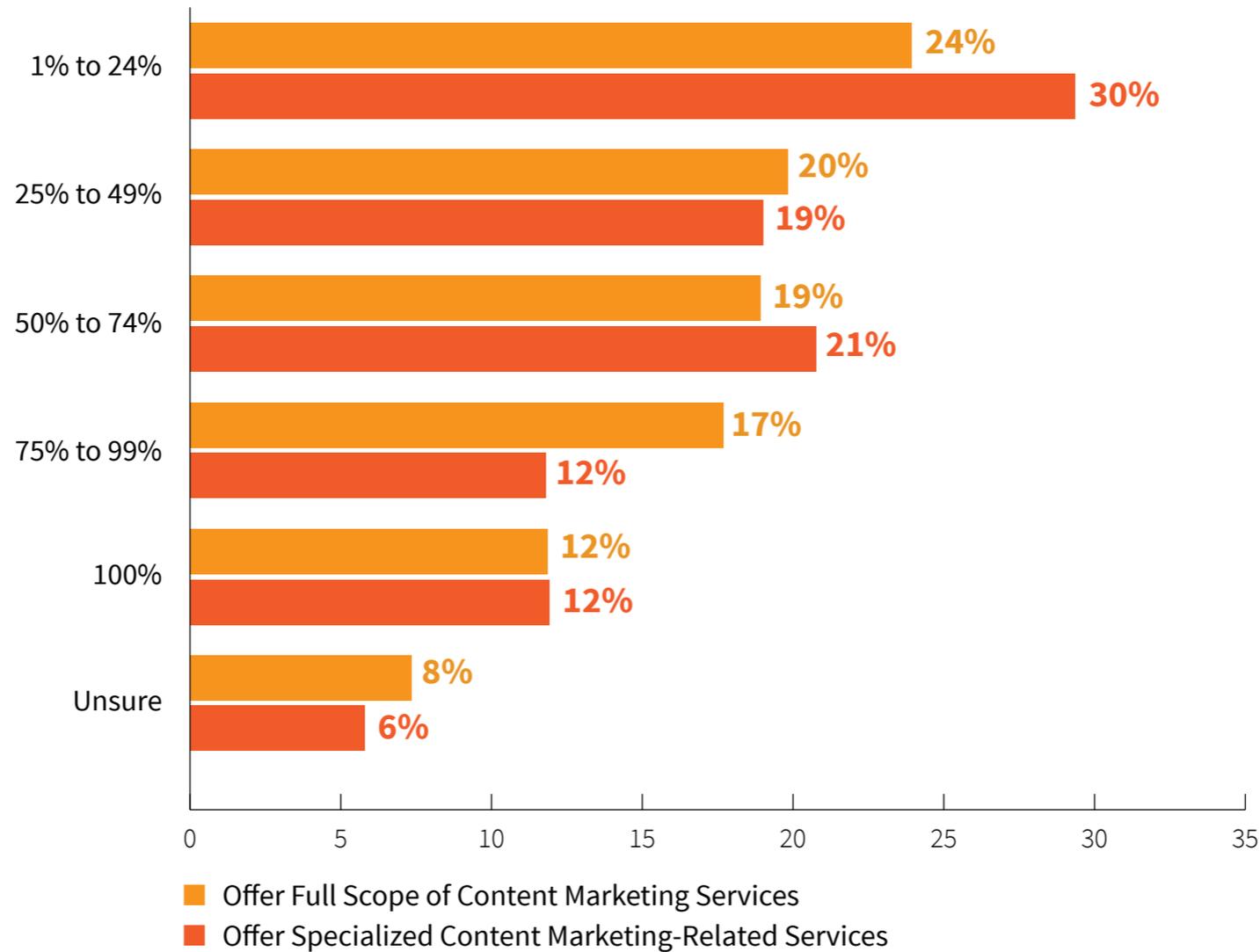
Number of Years Agency Has Been Offering Content Marketing Services to Clients



Base: All agency respondents; aided list.
Source: 2019 Content Marketing Institute Agency Survey

Nearly half from both agency types say content marketing services comprise 50% or more of their total business.

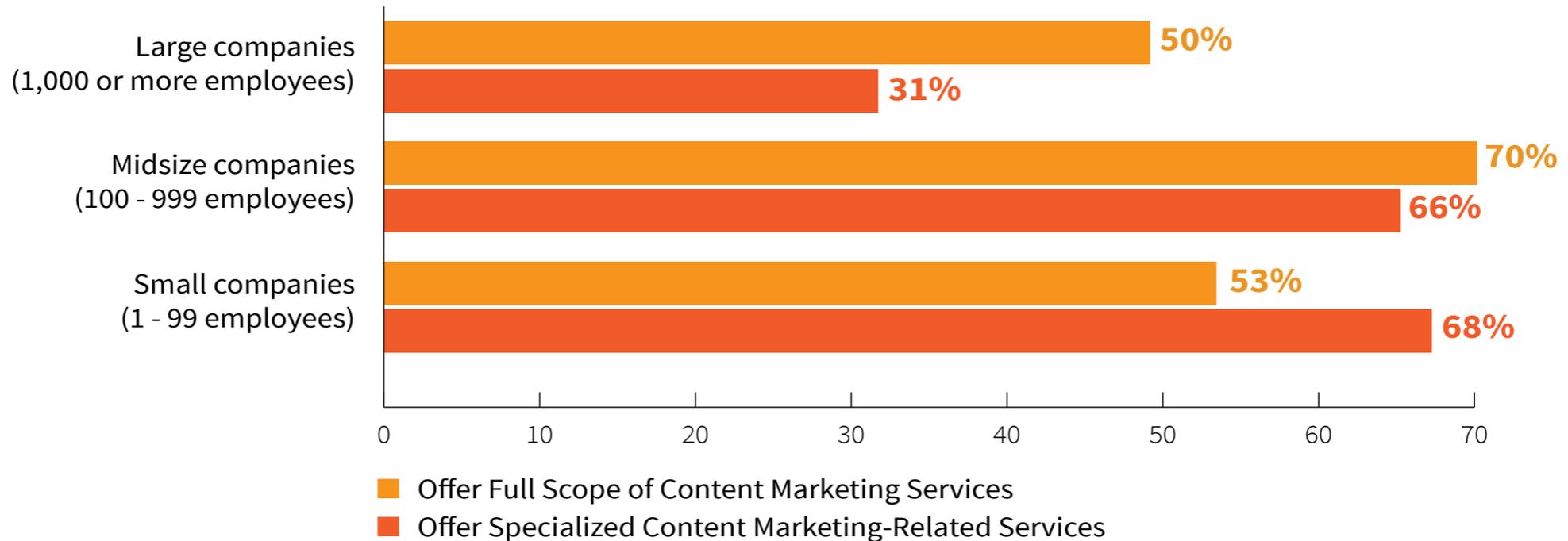
Content Marketing Services as a Percentage of Total Agency Business



Base: All agency respondents; aided list.
Source: 2019 Content Marketing Institute Agency Survey

Full-scope agency respondents report having more large and midsize content marketing clients than respondents whose agencies offer specialized services.

Size(s) of Clients' Organizations for Which Content Marketing Services Have Been Provided



Base: All agency respondents. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.
Source: 2019 Content Marketing Institute Agency Survey

Nearly all respondents offer both content marketing strategy and content creation services, with most clients using their agency for both.

Percentage of Agencies That Offer Listed Content Marketing Services

	Offer Full Scope of Content Marketing Services	Offer Specialized Content Marketing-Related Services
Content Creation	100%	97%
Content Marketing Strategy	99%	93%
Content Distribution—Owned	97%	89%
Content Distribution—Paid	92%	78%
Content Distribution—Earned	85%	72%

**Percentage of Clients That Use Agency for Listed Content Marketing Services
(Among Agencies That Offer the Service)**

	Offer Full Scope of Content Marketing Services	Offer Specialized Content Marketing-Related Services
Content Creation	100%	100%
Content Marketing Strategy	99%	97%
Content Distribution—Owned	95%	95%
Content Distribution—Paid	89%	90%
Content Distribution—Earned	82%	82%

Base: All agency respondents. Aided list; multiple responses permitted. Source: 2019 Content Marketing Institute Agency Survey

Full-scope agency respondents say editorial services are their most frequently offered content marketing service, whereas those from specialized agencies cite email/email campaign management.

Content Marketing-Related Services Offered

	Offer Full Scope of Content Marketing Services	Offer Specialized Content Marketing-Related Services
Editorial Services	87%	61%
Brand Strategy	83%	66%
Graphic Design/Images	81%	73%
Social Media Marketing/Management	79%	73%
Email/Email Campaign Management	77%	76%
Analytics	74%	64%
Web Design/Web Optimization	74%	64%
SEO/Keyword Research	74%	63%
Video Production/Marketing	71%	51%
Inbound Marketing (Lead Generation/Nurturing)	66%	45%

Other content marketing-related services offered: Audience Development (64% full-scope, 42% specialized), Search Engine Marketing (SEM)/Pay-Per-Click (62% full-scope, 43% specialized), User Experience (UX)/Content Strategy (59% full-scope, 52% specialized), PR/Media Relations (54% full-scope, 43% specialized), and Other (31% full-scope, 18% specialized). None of the respondents indicated “none of the above.”

*Base: All agency respondents. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.
Source: 2019 Content Marketing Institute Agency Survey*

Articles/blog posts and social media content are the top two types of content that both types of agencies create for content marketing clients.

Type(s) of Content Created for Clients

	Offer Full Scope of Content Marketing Services	Offer Specialized Content Marketing-Related Services
Articles/Blog Posts	93%	89%
Social Media Content	90%	89%
Websites/Website Content	88%	81%
Email	85%	84%
Videos	81%	52%
Infographics/Charts/Photos/Data Viz	79%	61%
Case Studies/White Papers	77%	66%
Printed Materials (e.g., magazines, brochures)	71%	61%

Other types of content created for clients: Ebooks (54% full-scope, 41% specialized), In-person Events/Live Experiences (45% full-scope, 31% specialized), Research Reports (42% full-scope, 28% specialized), Webinars/Virtual Events (38% full-scope, 23% specialized), Podcasts (31% full-scope, 13% specialized), and Other (37% full-scope, 11% specialized). None of the respondents indicated “do not offer content creation.”

*Base: All agency respondents. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.
Source: 2019 Content Marketing Institute Agency Survey*

Word-of-mouth referrals are the top nonpaid source for generating new content marketing-related business for both types of agencies, followed by agency blog/website and in-person events/networking.

Top Three Nonpaid Sources for Generating New Content Marketing-Related Business

	Offer Full Scope of Content Marketing Services	Offer Specialized Content Marketing-Related Services
Word-of-mouth Referrals	72%	72%
Agency Blog/Website	55%	40%
In-person Events/Networking	51%	48%
Thought Leadership (e.g., speaking, guest posts, interviews)	31%	35%
Organic Search	29%	28%
LinkedIn	21%	23%
Agency Recognition (e.g., awards, profile stories)	19%	17%

Other nonpaid sources indicated:

Instagram (5% full-scope, 2% specialized), Facebook (1% full-scope, 8% specialized), Twitter (1% full-scope, 2% specialized), and Other (3% full-scope, 11% specialized).

*Base: All agency respondents. Aided list; up to three responses permitted.
Source: 2019 Content Marketing Institute Agency Survey*

Use of Paid Sources

Fifty-six percent of full-scope and 38% of specialized agency respondents indicated their agency uses paid sources to generate new content marketing business.

Sponsorships (e.g., booths, workshops, branding) and paid search were the top two paid sources cited by full-scope agencies.*

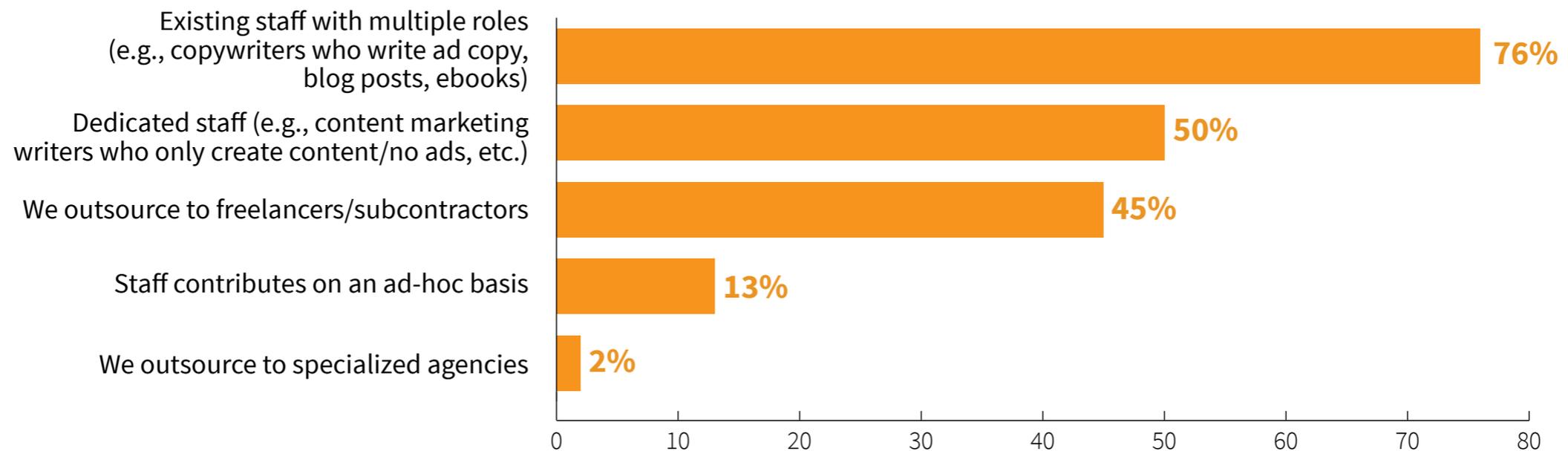
**Aided list of nine; up to three responses permitted. Additional details not presented due to low reported use.*

PART 2

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON AGENCIES OFFERING A FULL SCOPE OF CONTENT MARKETING SERVICES

Three out of four say existing staff with multiple roles are responsible for providing content marketing services to clients; half say they have dedicated staff to take on that responsibility.

Responsible for Providing Content Marketing Services to Clients

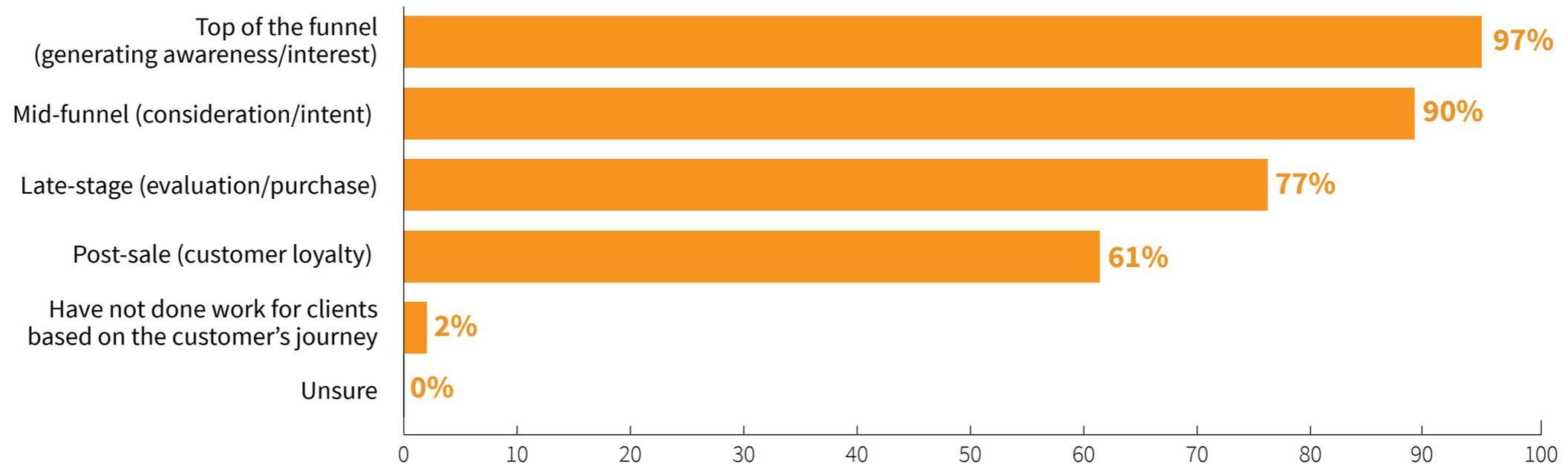


Base: Agency respondents offering a full scope of content marketing services. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.

Source: 2019 Content Marketing Institute Agency Survey

Most content marketing client work is reportedly done at the top of the funnel and the least at post sale.

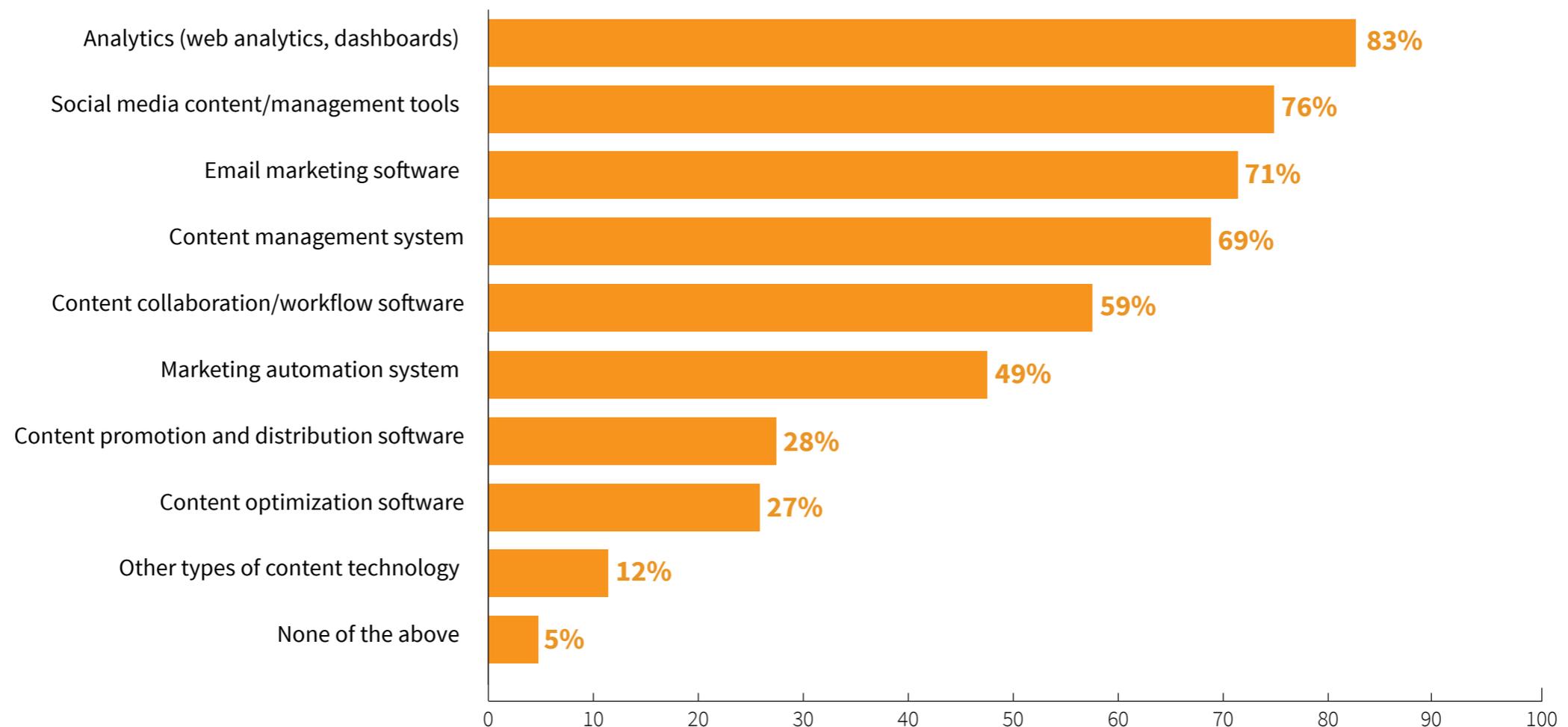
Content Marketing Client Work on Part(s) of Customer Journey



*Base: Agency respondents offering a full scope of content marketing services. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.
Source: 2019 Content Marketing Institute Agency Survey*

Respondents indicate the top technologies their agencies use to aid in content marketing efforts for clients are analytics, social media content/management tools, and email marketing software.

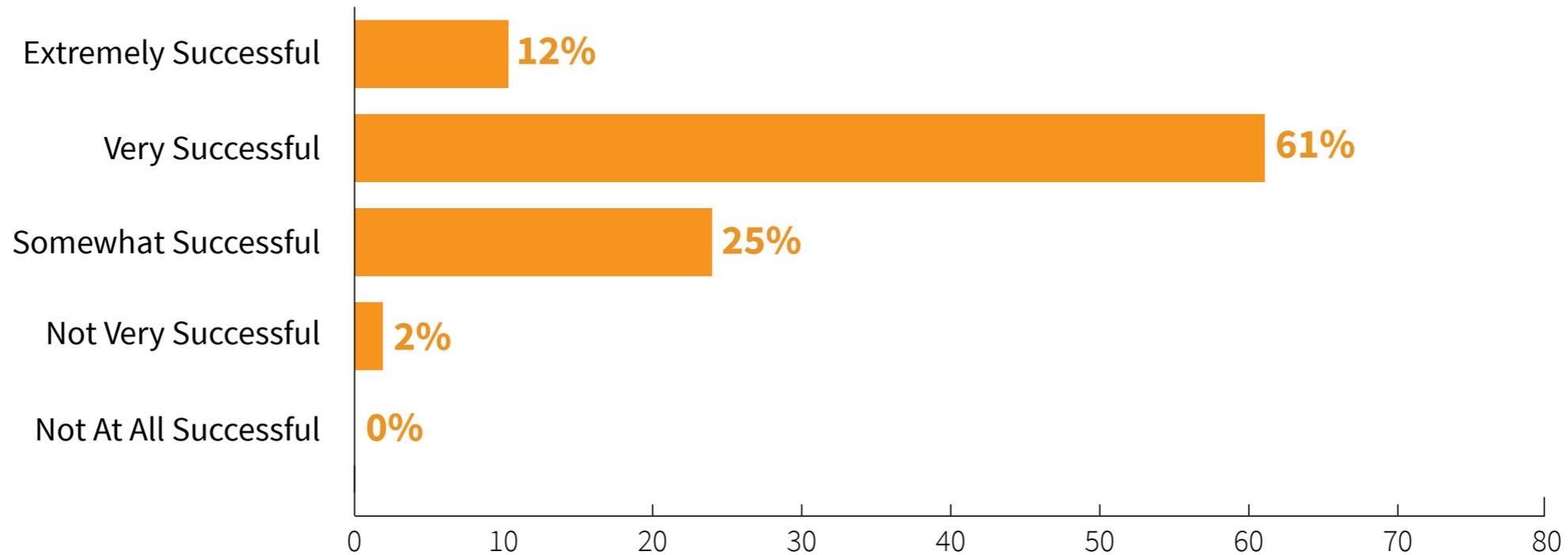
Technologies Used to Aid in Content Marketing Efforts for Clients



*Base: Agency respondents offering a full scope of content marketing services. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.
Source: 2019 Content Marketing Institute Agency Survey*

73% say their agency is extremely/very successful in achieving their clients' content marketing goals.

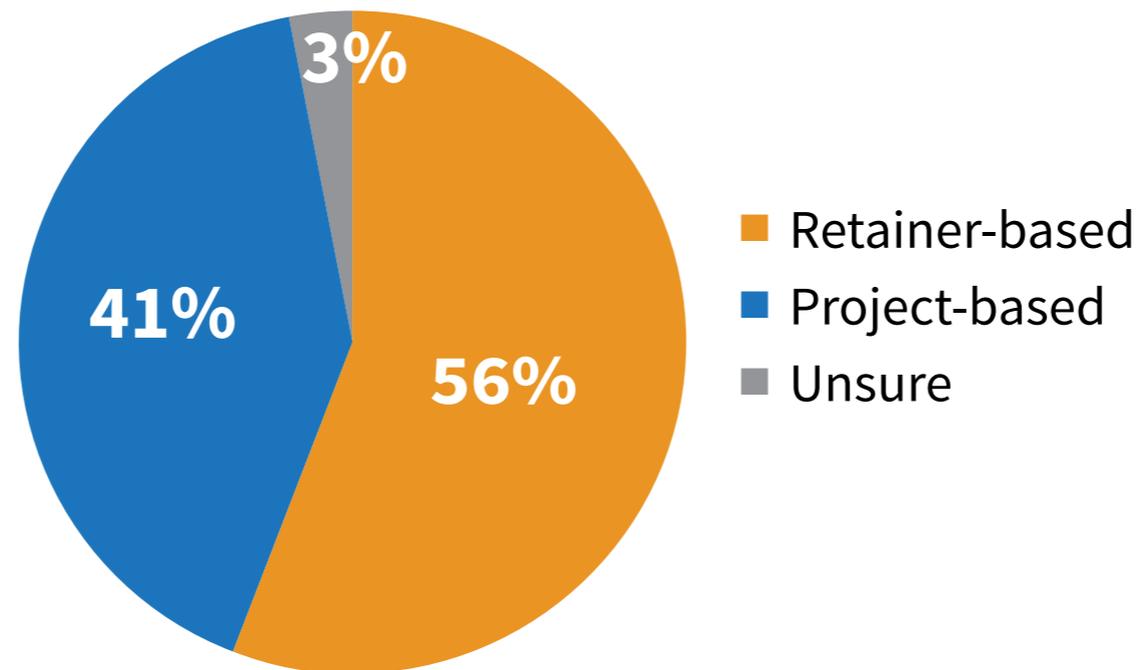
Overall Success in Achieving Clients' Content Marketing Goals



*Base: Agency respondents offering a full scope of content marketing services; aided list.
Source: 2019 Content Marketing Institute Agency Survey*

56% report their agency's content marketing work for clients is typically retainer-based.

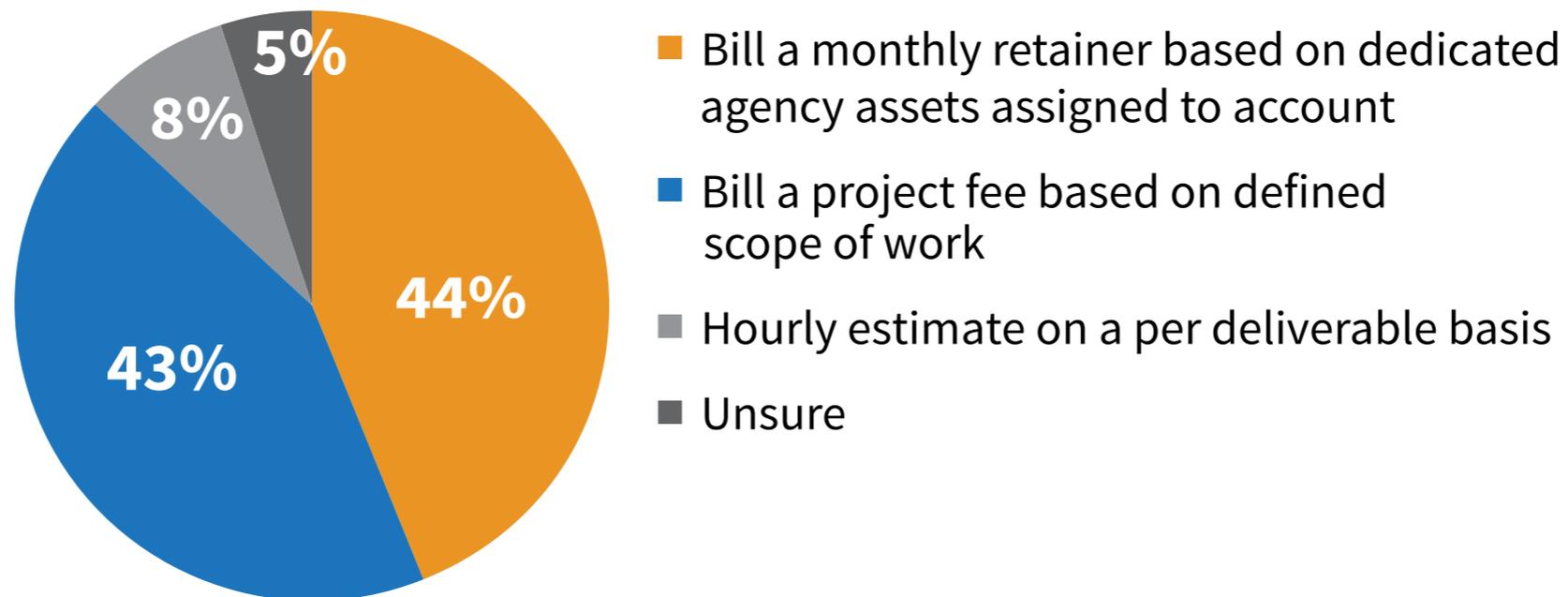
Typical Fee Structure for Content Marketing Work



*Base: Agency respondents offering a full scope of content marketing services; aided list.
Source: 2019 Content Marketing Institute Agency Survey*

44% say their agency typically bills for content marketing work on a monthly retainer based on dedicated assets assigned to the account, while 43% bill a project fee based on defined scope of work.

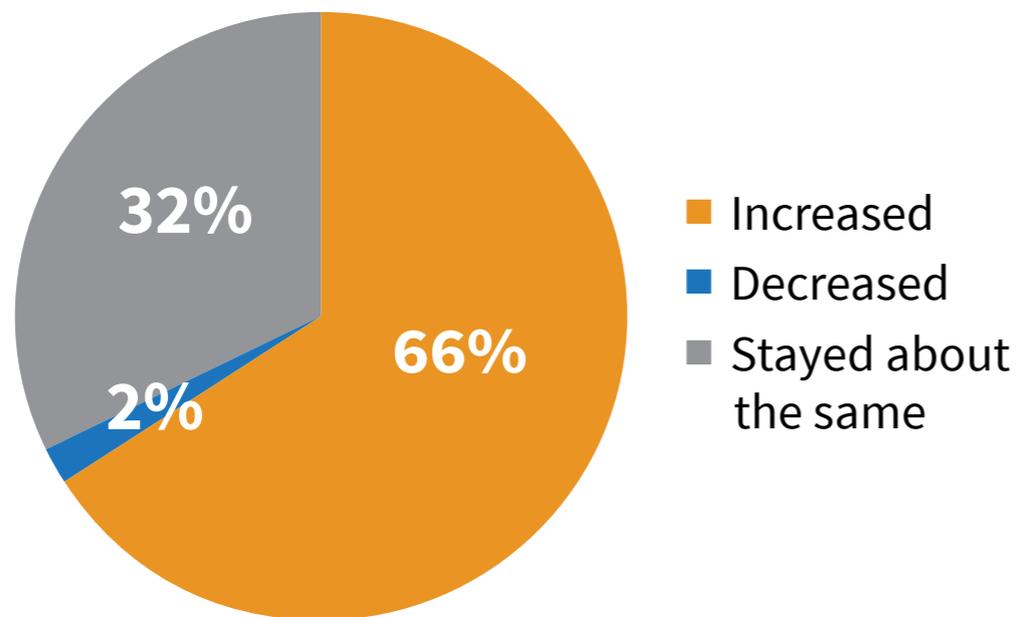
Typical Billing Method for Client Content Marketing Work



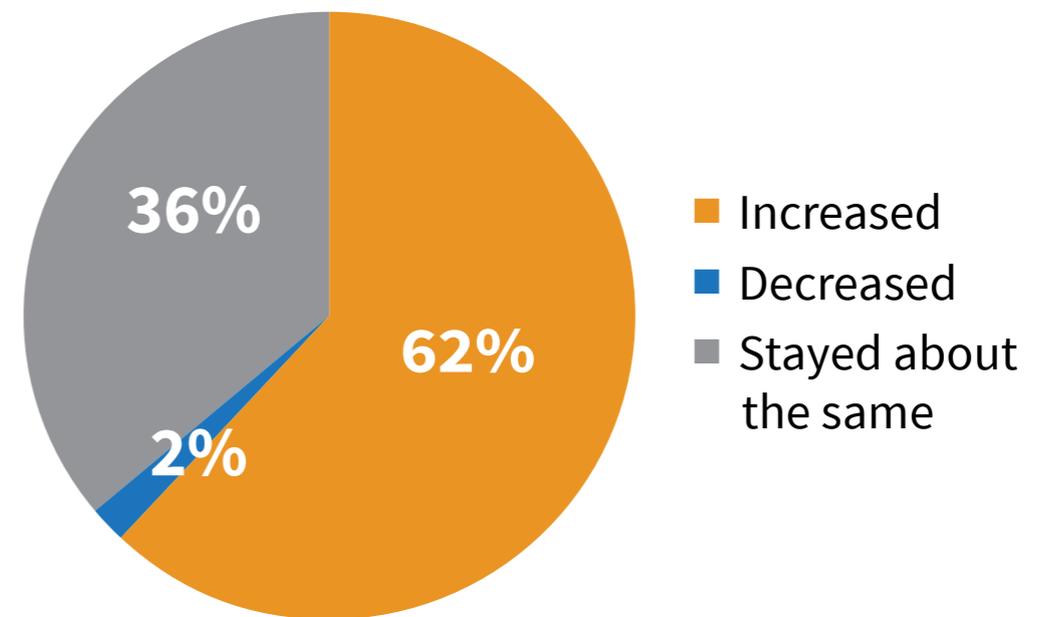
*Base: Agency respondents offering a full scope of content marketing services; aided list.
Source: 2019 Content Marketing Institute Agency Survey*

Nearly 70% say their agency has increased the breadth of content marketing services offered and the number of content marketing clients served in the last 12 months.

Change in Breadth of Content Marketing Services Offered in the Last 12 Months



Change in the Number of Content Marketing Clients in the Last 12 Months



*Base: Agency respondents offering a full scope of content marketing services; aided list.
Source: 2019 Content Marketing Institute Agency Survey*

PART 3

CHALLENGES

The background features a stylized illustration of a meeting. Three people are seated at a table; one is using a laptop. In the background, there are several gears of different sizes and a large lightbulb, symbolizing ideas and challenges. The entire scene is rendered in a monochromatic orange color palette.

Challenges—Full-Scope Agencies

We asked the full-scope agency respondents two fill-in questions and grouped their responses into categories to look for commonalities. A lack of understanding about content marketing seemed to be mentioned most often. Some of the responses are shown here.

“What is the most common challenge you hear from clients when they approach your agency for help with content marketing?”

■ Clients’ Understanding of the Content Marketing Process

“They don’t know how to use content to serve the business”

“They know they need it, but they don’t know how to go about it strategically or how to effectively scale it”

“They want to use it to sell rather than build relationships through engagement”

■ Costs/Budget

“Effective results within the budget”

“High expectations, low budget”

■ Measurement/ROI

“Impact measurement and ROI”

“Do I need to do this ... what’s the ROI ... how do we measure success?”

■ Lead Generation/Engagement

“How does it convert to sales?”

“More engagement”

■ Content Creation/Development

“Content creation—getting internal support/the experts to help produce content”

“They are unable to develop and deploy RELEVANT content on a CONSISTENT basis”

“What is the most common challenge you hear from clients when they approach your agency for help with content marketing?”

■ Lack of time

“No time, not enough skill”

“Not enough time to devote to marketing”

■ Absence of a Clear Strategy/ Strategy Development

“Random acts of content ...
no cohesive strategy”

“They don’t have a content strategy
and therefore don’t know where
to begin”

■ Customer’s Journey

“Most clients are looking for a mix of
improved brand awareness and leads”

“Clients are focused on late-stage
content and take a lot of convincing to
adopt a holistic content strategy”

■ Internal Issues/Buy-in

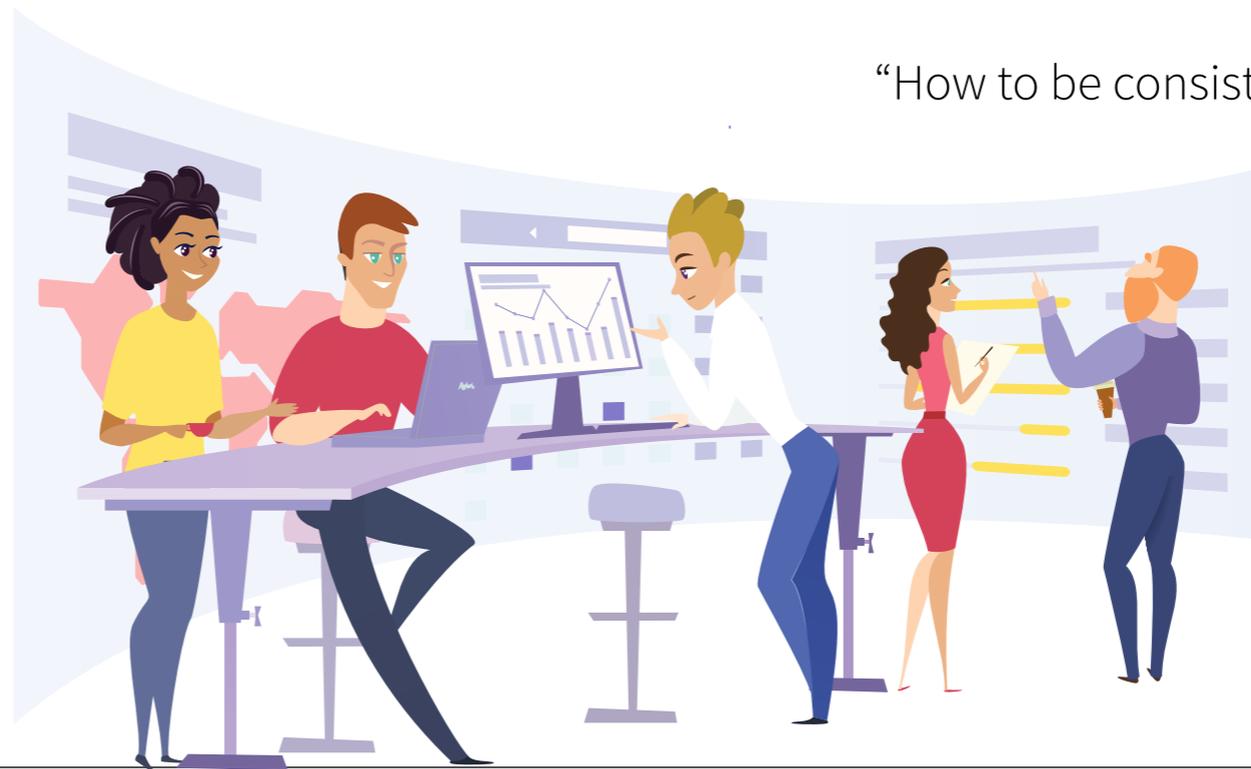
“Cannot do the work consistently
in-house”

“Getting buy-in from CEO”

■ Consistency

“Consistency and capability”

“How to be consistent across channels”



“What is your biggest challenge when it comes to offering content marketing services to clients?”

■ Clients' Understanding of the Content Marketing Process

“Helping clients understand its merit, value, effectiveness”

“Getting clients to understand what content marketing is about and that it's not a sell-first mentality”

“Getting the client to put the customer—rather than their product/service—first”

“Selling the value of ongoing, optimized content vs. campaign-based content”

“Getting clients to understand the need for content when they ask for SEO”

“Setting expectations for cost of quality and time to results”

■ Costs/Budget

“Getting it all done within budget constraints”

“They think it's too expensive or they don't understand the value”

■ Measurement/ROI

“Getting them to think long-term and use KPIs”

“Concretely quantifying results and ROI”

■ Internal Issues/Buy-in

“Convincing them they need it; after the fact, they mostly stick with us and keep sending work/asking for help”

“Getting buy-in”

“Fear ... taking away the fear”

■ Time Required

“Time consuming and easy to over-deliver vs. hours allocated”

“Explaining that most of the wanted results take time”

■ Staff/Additional Help

“Finding specialist partners in niche areas when we need them”

“Staffing good writers and getting client participation in thought leadership efforts”

■ Strategy/Strategy Development

“Getting clients to think beyond the outputs/deliverables and think more holistically about the outcomes they want to drive”

“Getting people to see the value and pay for strategy”

■ Customer's Journey

“Putting numbers to the connection between top-of-funnel content marketing and sales”

“Clients that only want part of the system and won't embrace CRM or conversions”

Challenges—Specialized Agencies

We asked the specialized agency respondents one fill-in question. As we did with the full-scope responses, we grouped comments into categories to look for patterns. Communication and expectations appeared to be common themes.

“What is your biggest challenge when it comes to *contributing services to a client’s content marketing program?*”

■ Client Interaction/Understanding

“Input from the client to create original, authentic content that is relevant and timely”

“Getting usable information from the client in a timely manner”

“Learning their industry and business model”

■ Clients’ Use of Multiple Agencies/Resources

“Finding clients who are willing to invest in content marketing services with our agency ... many are used to getting content from their brand agency”

“Some clients have multiple agencies to serve different needs—PR, social media, general marketing communications; in these instances, it can be a challenge to break out of our lane to provide more services to the client”

“Getting multiple vendors to work as one team on a focused message”

■ Costs/Budget

“Creating content at a profitable scale”

“Getting clients to allocate an adequate budget for services”

“What is your biggest challenge when it comes to *contributing services* to a client’s content marketing program?”

■ Measurement/ROI

“Measuring the right KPIs for the right goals—not only what is measurable, but what is really useful”

“Return on investment/measurement/analytics”

■ Internal Issues/Buy-in

“Their lack of clarity on what they want and cumbersome internal processes for completing projects”

“Getting buy-in from management”

■ Time Required

“The client having the time/resources to work with us on the strategy and delivery”

■ Strategy/Strategy Development

“Getting clients to involve us in larger strategy so we can contribute beyond the tactical level”

“Clients sometimes struggle to create or maintain an overall content marketing strategy”

■ Content Creation Development

“Define the right content for relevant audiences”

“Aligning content with each stage of the buyer’s journey”



The objective of this study was to better understand how agencies work with clients on content marketing.

On March 13, 2019, invitations to participate in an online survey were emailed to agency subscribers from the Content Marketing Institute (CMI) database. A reminder email was sent on March 27, 2019. During fielding, the following organizations also sent email invitations to portions of their agency member lists: Agency Management Institute (AMI), Marketing Communications Agency Network (MCAN), Transworld Advertising Agency Network (TAAN), and Worldcom Group.

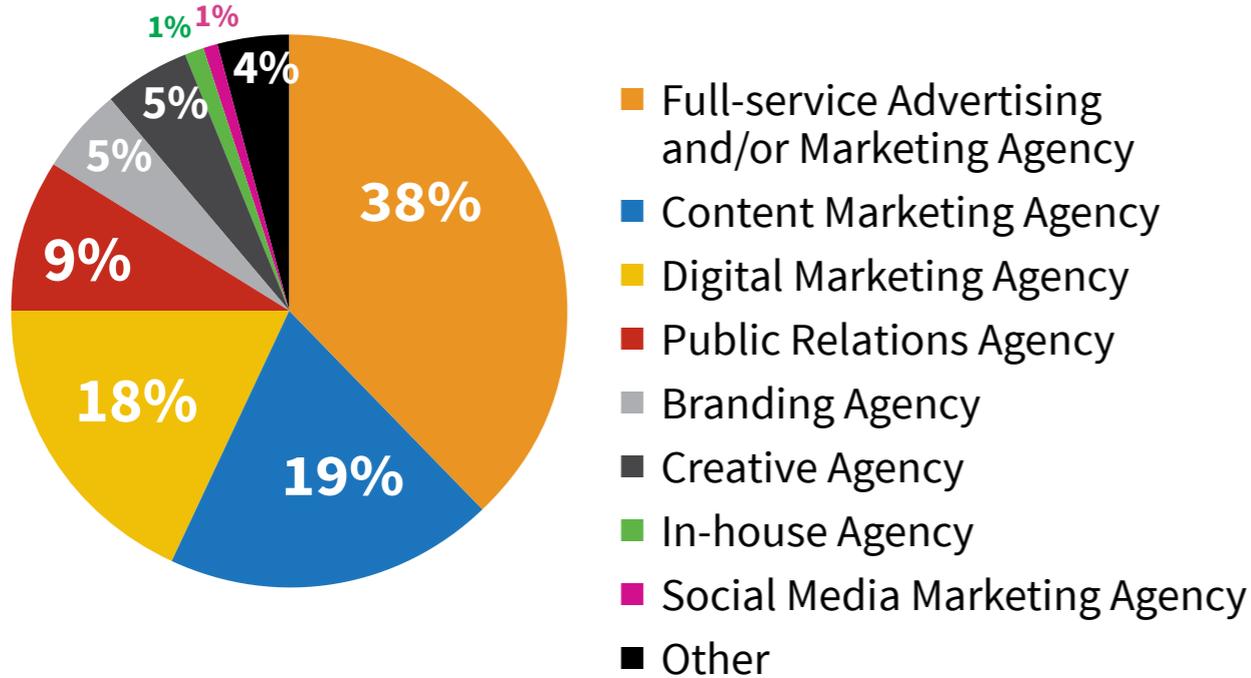
To encourage prompt response and optimize the response rate, a link was included in the invitation to route respondents directly to the online survey. The survey was branded with the CMI name and logo to capitalize on affinity for the brand.

CMI's research team designed the survey, programmed and hosted the online survey, collected and tabulated the data, and performed the analysis.

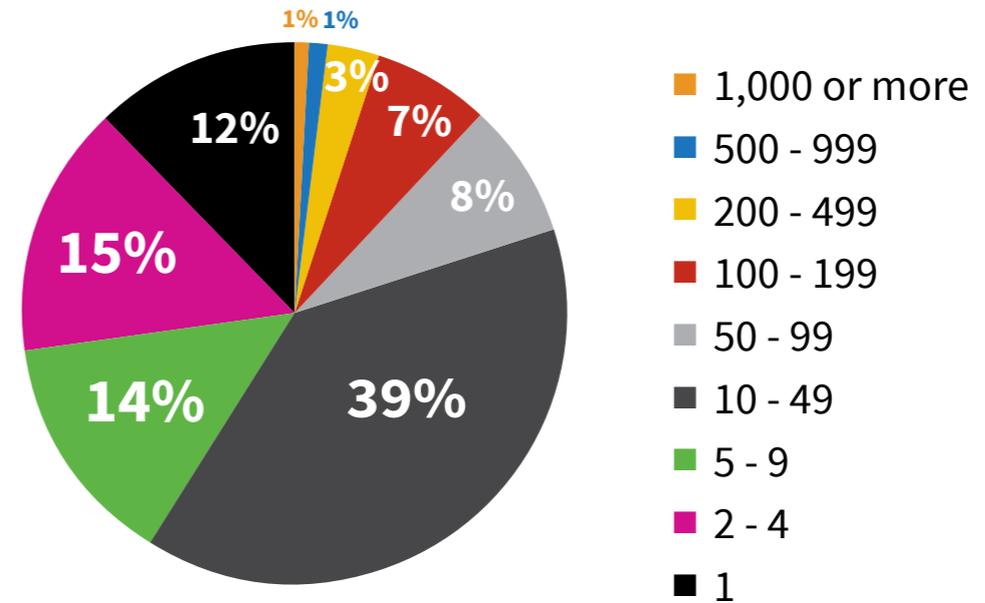
The survey closed on April 10, 2019 with 197 completed surveys. Most respondents indicated:

- Their agency is U.S.-based (71%)
- They are owners/partners of their agency (61%).

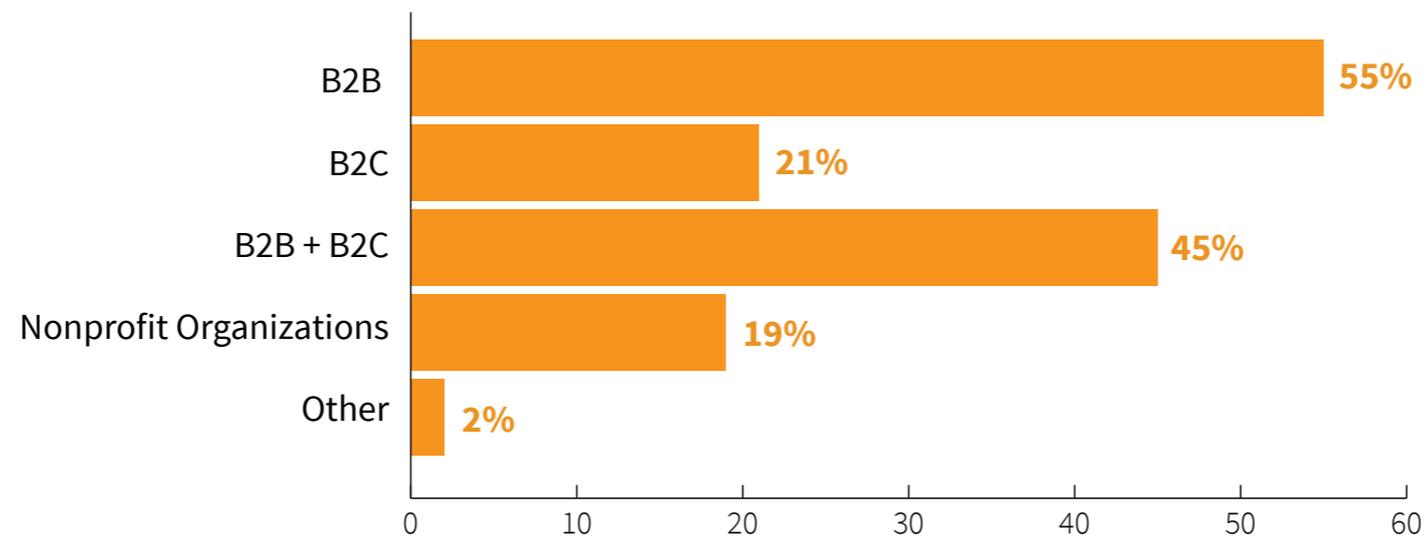
Type of Agency



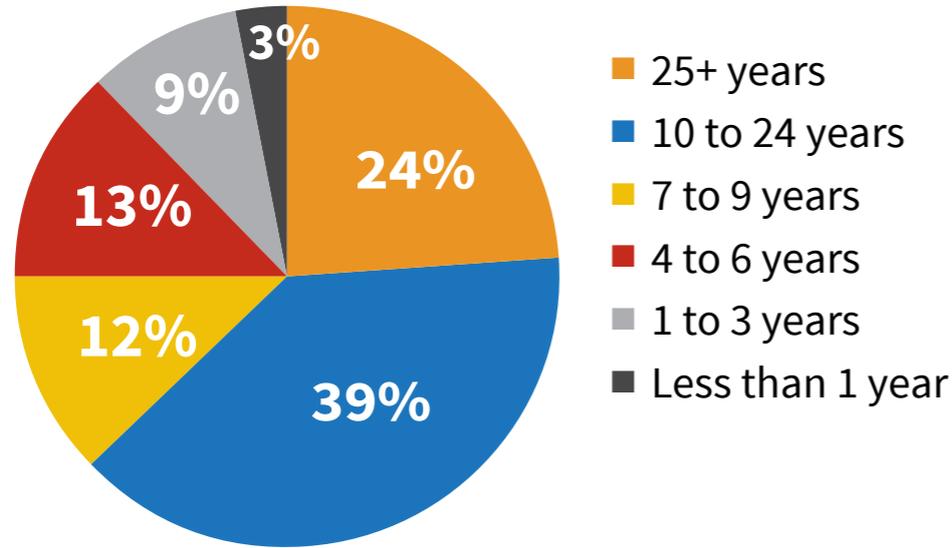
Size of Organization (by Employee Size)



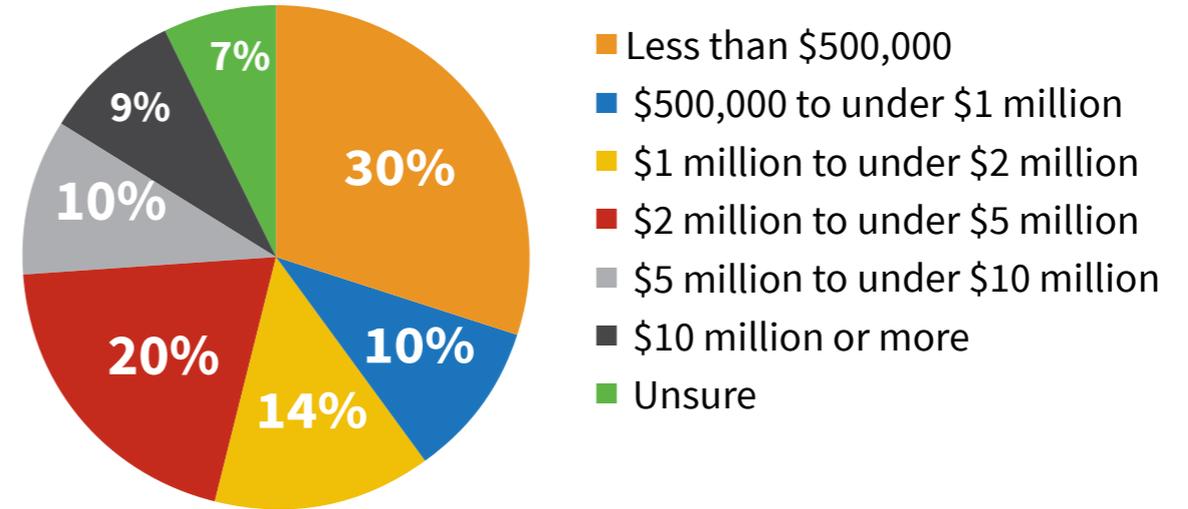
Types of Clients Agency Serves



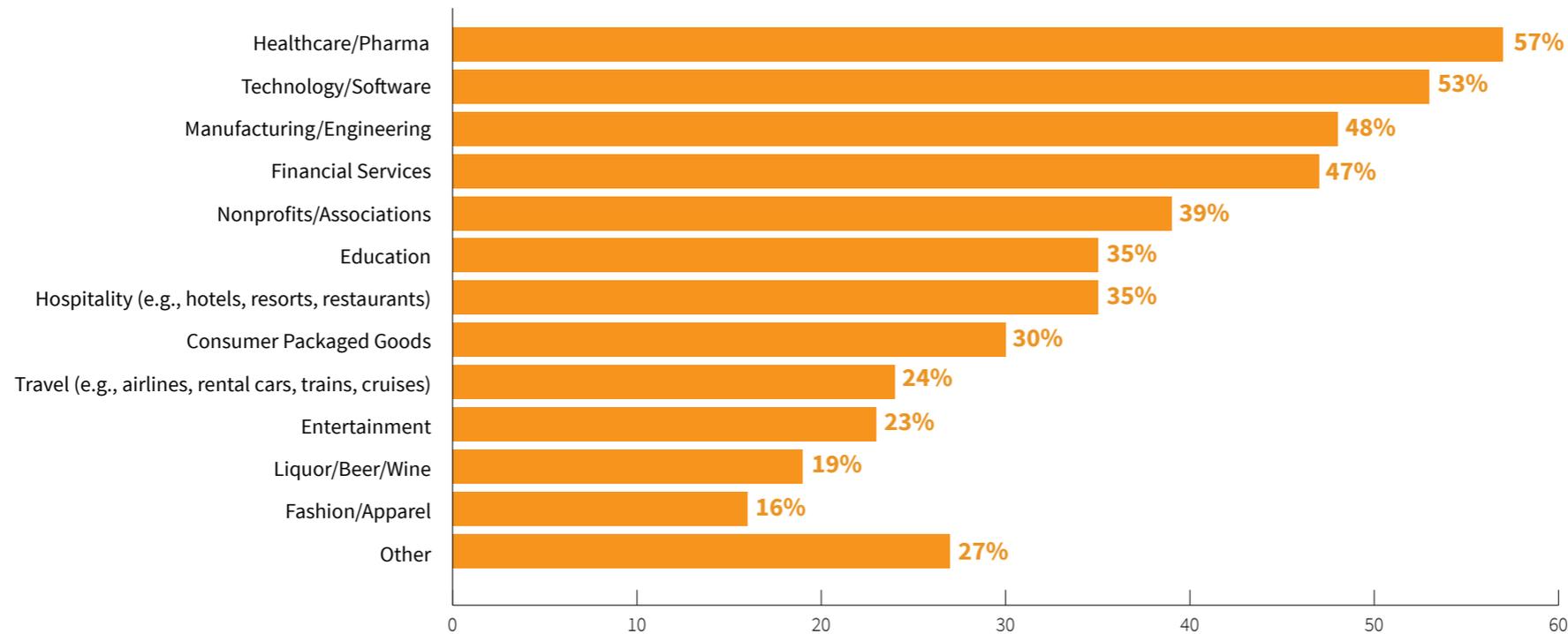
Number of Years Agency Has Been in Business



Agency's 2018 Total Gross Revenue



Types of Markets Agency Serves



About Content Marketing Institute

[Content Marketing Institute](#) is the leading global content marketing education and training organization, teaching enterprise brands how to attract and retain customers through compelling, multichannel storytelling. CMI's [Content Marketing World](#) event, the largest content marketing-focused event, is held every September in Cleveland, Ohio, USA, and [ContentTECH Summit](#) event is held every spring. CMI publishes the quarterly magazine [Chief Content Officer](#), and provides strategic consulting and content marketing research for some of the best-known brands in the world. Watch this [video](#) to learn more about CMI. Content Marketing Institute is organized by UBM, which in June 2018 combined with Informa PLC to become a leading B2B information services group and the largest B2B events organizer in the world. To learn more and for the latest news and information, visit www.informa.com.



Looking for more insights on content marketing for agencies? [Content Marketing World 2019](#), being held September 3-6 in Cleveland, will include an agency workshop, an agency track, and a branded content track.